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Grand Mufti Revives Alternative Arab Movement

1. Nationalist groups of all the Arab countries welcoming a plan conceived by the Iraqi Independence party tried to create a popular Arab National League but failed in their attempt to implement the movement. This League had been prescribed for supplementing the functions of the existing Arab League, in an effort to enhance its accomplishments in the field of Arab aspirations. Backed by the popular feeling of nationalist elements, the originators of this movement maintained that the present Arab League is not equipped for diplomatic and other reasons, to solve the pending Arab national problems, for fear of offending England and America. It was hoped that this new body could help achieve the Arab desires, by means of methods which the Arab League cannot employ.

2. Although thanks to the efforts of Abd-al-Rahman Agha, Wari al-Sha'id and Mr. Fathi al-Qasbi the movement was discouraged, the feeling gained by increasing masses of the Arab public is that the Arab League is failing in its fundamental aims. It is widely circulated that even is no longer capable of leading the League to bring satisfaction to Arab demands. More and more the public opinion is tending to regard the League as (a) a weak instrument, inasmuch as it is composed of government officials of Arab nations, who are anxious to cultivate friendly relations with England and America.

3. Elaborating upon this theme Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti, asserted his listeners to abandon all hope in the League for the defense of the Arab cause in Palestine and elsewhere, pointing out that the League had failed to take action in this respect, although the Palestine question had been on its agenda in October, November and December 1946. Another League failure according to the Mufti had been the League's inaction in the Alexandria (Matay) controversy, which had been quietly stricken from its roll by the secretary-general, in response to a British recommendation. This reference to the Matay is apparently calculated to appeal to Syria, which appears to be lending support to the Grand Mufti. Prior to returning to his native Syria, Gamal Mardas former Syrian Minister to Egypt consulted the Grand Mufti on these matters and pledged his cooperation. That Syria has an unusual interest in the Mufti's intentions was demonstrated when upon his arrival to Cairo on 1 January 1947, Riad al-Sulh, Premier of Syria called upon the Mufti at his home in Baytun on 4 January and renewed the pledge given to the Mufti by Gamal Mardas.

4. Not content with exhortations and seizing the lead provided by the Iraqi Independence party (para 1), the Grand Mufti developed his own secret plan of creating an Arab organization for supplementing and finally for superseding the Arab League. This Arab body, which is at present in process of formation, appears to have made some progress in Palestine, where the Grand Mufti's own Arab High Committee is actively engaged in sponsoring the movement. Instrumental in this work are al-Ayad Qasbi al-Din al-Husseini, Saayn al-Khalidi, Isil al-Ghuri and Ahmed Hilmi Facha. Its first action

will be the defense of Palestine against British imperialism and Zionist *domination.*

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Organization of Grand Mufti's Organization

5. The plan of the Grand Mufti calls for the creation of an independent Arab body composed of two units:

- a) Al-Ansar (comrades)
- b) Majlis al-Sahaba (High Council)

If the Arab League ever fails in its mission, these two units will carry on its work, in accordance with the dictates of the popular will of the Arab nations, steering clear of the path of their governments. They will strive to unify the Arabs on the principle that "the Arabs are one nation".

6. The duty of al-Ansar is to carry out the recommendations of Majlis al-Sahaba.

- a) Al-Ansar is a secret youth organization recruited from volunteers of all the Arab nations on the basis of individual merit, courage, loyalty and devotion to the Arab cause. They will not be over 20 years of age, forming into branches for each Arab state and dividing into cells of five members each. They will drill in military fashion provided that their movements and their names are kept secret. This unit is envisaged to form the nucleus of a future Arab Army. Although it will have no officers, it is provided that upon orders from the Majlis al-Sahaba unknown leaders will direct individual al-Ansar groups to punish Arab League or other Arab officials who do not loyally discharge their patriotic duties. Death in short order will be the penalty for each traitor.
- b) The Majlis al-Sahaba will appraise the work of the Arab League. It will support the Arab League if the League acts honestly in the interest of the Arab Nations, but it will severely judge any mistakes and vacillation. Should the violence of the al-Ansar terrorist group will be applied to punish the slanders. The Majlis al-Sahaba will be composed of representatives from each Arab nation. The general leadership is reserved for the Grand Mufti.

Note. The Grand Mufti has already nominated Muhammed Sayid Salah al-Din of Cairo, to represent Egypt in the Majlis al-Sahaba. Salah al-Din, Wafdist ex-undersecretary of foreign affairs was retired because of his political affiliation and is at present a manager in the Cairo water works. The Grand Mufti has recommended Salah al-Din because he is a fearless patriot who will not submit to the British at any price.

Principles of al-Ansar and Majlis al-Sahaba

7. The principles of the group as defined by the Grand Mufti are:

- a) The Arab individual in any Arab country will be the brother of all the Arabs in that country. His relationship to his original home will be that of the individual to his family. The Greater Arab State will be his only home. Its citizens are all the Arabs.
- b) The Fact of the Arab League is the sharpest weapon the Arabs hold.

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Against their antagonists, but if the arms holding this weapon ever falter, the hands of al-Ansar will prove stronger to carry the weapon on that day.

- c) The duties of al-Ansar will consist of settling accounts with the Arab leaders, sacrificing themselves with blood and soul if necessary.
- d) The aim of union of all the Arab nations by the Arab League cannot be accomplished unless an Arab Army is formed; their economy and their foreign policies are unified. These are the three fundamental conditions upon which the independence and the union of the Arabs can stand.
- e) Palestine is an Arab Home; we must prevent with violence the depriving of this Arab land from its freedom; we must not permit its dismemberment from the body of the Arab nation. The Arab League will be neglecting its duty as long as the Palestinian question remains unsolved.
- f) The spreading of the principles of this group and its aims all over the Arab world will be carried out; the Army of al-Ansar will be recruited from them; guesthouses will be established to exchange visits between Arab lands, to help al-Ansar grow; to travel. These guest houses will serve as club rooms for the Arab youth and will be established in all the Arab countries. They will be managed by the Arab youth. No Arab will be received in the guest house unless he is in possession of his identification card issued by responsible representatives. Other aims of the guest houses are:
 - 1. To arrange sports matches between the countries of the union of the Arab youth.
 - 2. To spread the Arabic culture.
 - 3. To celebrate the national holidays in an appropriate manner.
 - 4. To facilitate the means for a living, of travelling fellow Arabs and fellow students.

Each guest house will provide information with regard to the country in which it is established, so that the Arab guest may know the situation in the land where he is travelling.

Grand Mufti's Viewpoints-America and the Arab League

8. In visiting Arab leaders the Grand Mufti continues to deplore the sad state of Arab affairs. The Arab League constitutes his favorite topic of conversation, which he portrays as a disgraceful symbol of Arab betrayal. He corroborates his statement asserting that the Soviet Union and France disapprove the conduct of the Arab League, because these two nations are convinced that the League is a political instrument wielded by the British. As to America, its stand is characterized by evasion. Although America dislikes the British ascendancy in the Arab world, it cultivates friendly relations and supports the British for temporary expediency. Actually, America hopes some day to secure the control of the League for deriving the best possible result in favor of the mounting American economic and political interest in the Middle East, including the existing and proposed pipe lines and its close relations with Palestine and Saudi Arabia.

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America and the Hashimite-Saudite Fund

9. According to the Grand Mufti the Hashimites (Transjordan-Iraq) under the Americans who support their rival Saudites (Saudi Arabia), supplying them with money and undertaking improvements in the country for their own benefit. To counteract the increasing American prestige in Saudi Arabia, the British have sponsored friendly relations between the Kings of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, hoping in this manner to win Ibn Saud to the British side some day. This action has displeased the Prince of Transjordan (?) and his sister's son, the tutor of the King of Iraq (?), because it has increased the influence of Ibn Saud in the Arab League.

Other Opinions-Case of Lebanon

10. The Grand Mufti foresees that the 'Greater Syria' project and the proposal for a union of Iraq and Transjordan threaten the existence of the Arab League. In addition to these difficulties are the constant intrigues by communist agents and the uncompromising Turkish attitude, as well as complications presented by the unstable political structure in Lebanon. This small country, torn by internal dissensions and an easy prey to Communism, joined the League against its will, only after a bitter struggle, because the large Christian element in Lebanon declined joining the League which is composed exclusively of Islamic member states.

11. Because of these undercurrents the Grand Mufti predicts that the League is doomed to disintegration in spite of all the best British efforts, a contingency which he relishes with unconcealed jubilation. For this reason he wishes to prepare the Arab youth to rise to the occasion when the time arrives, for assuming the responsibilities of the Arab League in leading the destinies of the Arab world. Hence his determination to organize the al-Nahda and the Haraka al-Islamiya.

12. Tracing the origin of the League, the Grand Mufti recalls that the project had long remained in Arab dream, which was not fulfilled until the British acceded to its organization in accordance with their conception, although it had been under consideration by the British since 1922. At that time they induced the late King Faysal of Iraq to sponsor the project. Faysal despatched Huri al-Haid, then a simple citizen to Egypt, to contract negotiations with the son of the late King Faid. Although some progress had been made in this direction, the obscure political outlook of the Egyptian Revolution-Saad Zaghlul's period - caused the failure of the plan. However the British policy favored the project of the Arab League in 1945 on Mustaf al-Nuhur, who dreamt of becoming the all-powerful leader of all the Arabs. His dismissal from the government and the withdrawal of British support from him ended his illusions. With the advent of Abd-al-Rahman Azam as the general-secretary of the League, the Arabs were treated to a rude awakening when finally the British let the Arab leaders perceive that the League is intended for the ultimate designs of British diplomacy.